AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing below of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the present application:

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Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of cooling strip or wire products subsequent to being annealed, said method comprising the steps of: winding the product around a cooling drum immediately downstream of an annealing path so that the product lies in mutual juxtaposed turns on the drum; cooling the product to a desired temperature of from about 20°C to about 50°C below the oxidation temperature of the material; maintaining the product as it is cooled within a curved path that has a diameter greater than a diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation; and wherein the drum has a diameter that exceeds a the diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation.

Claim 2 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 1, including the steps of: placing the drum in a closed housing that includes a product inlet opening and a product outlet opening, and providing a shielding gas atmosphere within the housing.

Claim 3 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 2, wherein the shielding gas is selected from the group consisting of argon, hydrogen, and nitrogen gas and combinations and mixtures thereof.

Claim 4 (previously presented): A method according to claim 1, including the step of cooling the drum by forced convection of the atmosphere surrounding the drum.

Claim 5 (currently amended): A method ~~according to claim 1, including the step of~~ of cooling strip or wire products subsequent to being annealed, said method comprising the steps of: winding the product around a cooling drum immediately downstream of an annealing path so that the product lies in mutual juxtaposed turns on the drum; cooling the product to a desired temperature of from about 20°C to about 50°C below the oxidation temperature of the material; wherein the drum has a diameter that exceeds a diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation; and cooling the drum by introducing an external coolant into the drum.

Claim 6 (previously presented): A method according to claim 1, including the step of constructing the drum from a metallic material.

Claim 7 (previously presented): A method according to claim 1, including the step of rotating the drum with a drive motor.

Claim 8 (currently amended): An arrangement for cooling strip or wire material products where the product is cooled after having been annealed, said

arrangement comprising: a cooling drum positioned immediately downstream of an annealing path for receiving on a drum peripheral surface turns of the product such that the turns of the product ~~will be~~ are mutually juxtaposed for cooling the product to a desired temperature of from about 20°C to about 50°C below the oxidation temperature of the material; means for maintaining the product during cooling in a curved path that has a diameter greater than a diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation; wherein the drum has a diameter which exceeds a the diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation.

Claim 9 (previously presented): An arrangement according to Claim 8, wherein the drum is located in a closed housing that has an inlet opening and an outlet opening for the product; and wherein the housing contains and maintains a shielding gas atmosphere.

Claim 10 (currently amended): An arrangement according to Claim 9, ~~wherein the~~ including means for introducing into the housing a shielding gas atmosphere ~~is~~ selected from the group consisting of argon, hydrogen, and nitrogen gas, and combinations and mixtures thereof.

Claim 11 (previously presented): An arrangement according to claim 8, wherein the drum is cooled by forced convection of the atmosphere surrounding the drum.

Claim 12 (currently amended): An arrangement ~~according to claim 8,~~ for cooling strip or wire material products where the product is cooled after having been annealed, said arrangement comprising: a drum positioned immediately downstream of an annealing path for receiving on a drum peripheral surface turns of the product such that the turns of the product will be mutually juxtaposed for cooling the product to a desired temperature of from about 20°C to about 50°C below the oxidation temperature of the material; wherein the drum has a diameter which exceeds a diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation; wherein the drum is cooled by an external coolant that is introduced to cool the inside of the drum.

Claim 13 (previously presented): An arrangement according to Claim 12, wherein the drum is made of a metallic material.

Claim 14 (previously presented): An arrangement according to claim 8, wherein the drum is motor-driven.